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NR08-06 - Statement by district commander on south Orange County toll road

Written by Greg Fuderer
Friday, 18 April 2008

News Release 08-06
US Army Corps Of Engineers
April 18, 2008 Immediate

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Statement by district commander on south Orange County toll road project


I truly appreciate the interest and discussion in the media, in the public and among various government agencies and private interest groups regarding a letter I wrote. I believe debate over an important topic is a great way to ensure as many viable options are considered and a way to help make sure all parties have the opportunity to present their view of an issue. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is dedicated to serving the public interest and to fulfilling our role in environmental stewardship.

Regarding the proposed toll road in south Orange County, the Los Angeles District's role is to serve as an impartial agency to determine which of many proposed methods meets the project's goals while simultaneously causing the least impact on the aquatic resources, including wetlands, as well as the surrounding environment.

That process is rarely simple and requires extensive research over many years to develop alternatives that attempt to meet both those goals. In the end, though, only one agency has the authority to determine which alternative is the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative (LEDPA) - the Corps. That is because the LEDPA determination is specific to the Corps' Clean Water Act Section 404 Permit Program. Since the location of the proposed road falls within the jurisdiction of the Corps' Los Angeles District, I, as its commander, am responsible to make that decision.

As part of the collaborative of federal, state and local agencies, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers did identify a preliminary LEDPA in 2005 based on information available to us at the time. My intent in the letter, as a neutral arbiter in the environmental review, was to make clear that our process has not run its course. There has been no final, formal decision on any of the remaining practicable alternatives. More analysis, public review and comment are needed and are ongoing.

All parties involved in the decision process understand a great deal is at stake: for commuters, for the economy, for the environment and for recreation. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is committed to a comprehensive and unbiased review of all information and points of view during the environmental review process. The citizens of California have my pledge that the decision I make will be based on the best science available and a determination to rule in the public interest. When the Final Environmental Impact Statement is complete, we look forward to presenting it to the public for comment, and will stand proudly behind our actions when we do.



US Army Corps of Engineers
Los Angeles District

Col. Thomas H. Magness, IV

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